



DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

INFORMATION SERVICE

FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

For Release to SUNDAY PAPERS, OCTOBER 20, 1946

PACIFIC SARDINE SEASON POOREST IN YEARS

Disastrously small catches of Pacific sardines are continuing to make the current season--now well into its third month of fishing--one of the poorest in the history of the sardine industry, the Fish and Wildlife Service of the Department of the Interior said today.

Landings of sardines at San Francisco, Monterey, and San Pedro, centers of the industry, had totaled only 33,619 tons by October 11, compared with 192,969 tons on the same date last year. The fishing season began August 1 at the two northern ports and October 1 at San Pedro.

Milton C. James, Assistant Director of the Fish and Wildlife Service, said that the reduced tonnage of fish compared with last year has already caused a loss of nearly \$5,000,000 to California fishermen. In addition, the hundreds of people who ordinarily work in the canneries have had little or no employment.

Only 178,464 cases of sardines have been packed this season, although the pack for the comparable period last year reached 862,754 cases. This season's canning so far has been confined to Monterey, the San Francisco canneries having stood completely idle for lack of fish.

Figures released by the Fish and Wildlife Service show that, during the years 1941 through 1945, the average landings of sardines during the first two months of the fishing season were 149,963 tons. This year only 16,496 tons had been caught by the end of September. After the San Pedro boats entered the fishery the first

of October, one good day's fishing out of that port added about 9,000 tons to the catch. This day was a freak in the otherwise dismally poor season, however, for the first eleven days of October produced only 17,123 tons.

Mr. James said that it is impossible as yet to determine the reason for the failure of the sardine fishery, but commented that Service biologists do not believe that the total population of sardines has declined as sharply as the reduced catch figures might suggest. Oceanic conditions, such as water temperatures, are known to affect the distribution and habits of the schools and may be in part responsible for this year's poor fishing.

x x x